



ACR – Administrative Codes and Registers Section

Robert J. Colborn, Jr. Innovation Award 2009 NOMINATION FORM

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Completely answer all questions. If a question does not apply, type "not applicable" in the space provided.

Nominations are due no later than June 1, 2009, and are selected by members of the Robert J. Colborn, Jr. Innovation Award Nomination Committee.

NOMINATED PROGRAM INFORMATION

Title of Nomination			Date
Virginia Regulation Information System (RIS)			May 29, 2009
Project Program Manager	First Name	Last Name	Title
	Lilli	Hausenfluck	Editor, Virginia Administrative Code
Name of ACR member on staff	First Name	Last Name	Title
	Jane	Chaffin	Registrar of Regulations
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Division of Legislative Services		Virginia Code Commission	
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NOMINATOR'S INFORMATION (if different than above)

First Name	Last Name	Title	Agency
Mailing Address		City	State Zip Code
Phone # (include area code)	Fax # (include area)	e-mail address	

By submitting this form and nomination information you affirm you have read the Nomination Packet and affirm that:

- The information submitted is truthful and does not infringe on any copyright;
- None of the information included in this nomination, including the executive summary or statement of justification, is confidential, proprietary, or a trade secret.

Please submit the following information with this nomination form:

- An executive summary and statement of justification as outlined in the Robert J. Colborn, Jr. Innovation Award Nomination Packet. Submit this nomination form and the information above to: jon.davidson@sos.arkansas.gov.

2009 Robert J. Colborn, Jr. Innovation Award Committee Members:

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Executive Summary for the 2009 Robert J. Colborn, Jr. Innovation Award

Please use this area to complete a one-page executive summary about the program nominated. Refer to the nomination packet.

Title of Nomination

Nominator

Virginia Regulation Information System (RIS)

Jane Chaffin

At its root level, government is a system of laws and regulations that must be adhered to by its citizens and businesses. The Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) contains these regulations and is jointly developed and maintained by both the legislative and executive branches. A highly collaborative and innovative IT partnership between the two branches has created an adaptive electronic filing and database management system that functions across organizational and geographical boundaries.

The Regulation Information System (RIS) application was launched in July 2007 and is under Virginia's Legislative Information System umbrella. The RIS application provides publication of a real-time VAC on the Internet, a substantial reduction of redundant and paper-based processes, simplified business rules for agencies, and accurate regulatory documents made available for citizens.

The regulatory process in Virginia is a complex system with multiple levels of publication requirements to ensure public transparency and participation. State agencies submit regulatory actions in the executive branch's Virginia Regulatory Town Hall (Town Hall) application operated by the Department of Planning and Budget for executive branch review and approval. Once approved, the legislative branch's Office of the Registrar of Regulations completes official publication in the bi-weekly Virginia Register of Regulations and compiles all permanent regulations into the online Virginia Administrative Code.

Prior to implementation of the RIS collaborative electronic filing system, the online VAC was generally four to six months out of date due to multiple process obstacles. Citizens could have difficulty determining the most current version of applicable regulations, and many tables in the online VAC were unreadable by the public due to restrictions in the outside vendor's update process. Agencies had to maintain their own databases, enter redundant submissions to both entities, follow complicated version control procedures, and maintain paper files. The Office of the Registrar had to follow a predominantly paper-based and labor-intensive process to publish the Virginia Register.

In order to create a fully functional electronic filing system that would allow automatic updates to the online VAC, many technological obstacles had to be overcome. To begin with, legislative and executive branch systems operated with different databases, entry points, user requirements, legacy table and data structures, web server software, server side scripting tools, and interface requirements.

To create a fully integrated solution, policy personnel from both branches worked closely together to create business rules and requirements. In-house technical teams then applied the business rules to create an entirely new system on the back end that eliminated data and system barriers while maintaining a high degree of security and version control and avoiding significant user changes through a single face agency entry approach.

Training personnel then conducted extensive hands-on usage instruction and within seven months over 250 state personnel representing over 90 boards, commissions and departments of state government were trained and effectively operating within the new system.

The Regulation Information System, developed in collaboration with upgrades to the Town Hall website; provides a centralized, web-based approach that standardizes and simplifies input from every state agency; enables efficient communication between the staff in the Registrar's Office and agency regulatory staff; and streamlines service delivery to the public.

Statement of Justification:

a) Project Description

Please use this area to complete the project description. The Statement of Justification shall not exceed five pages.

Title of Nomination

Length of time in operation

Virginia Regulation Information System (RIS)

Two years

The regulatory process in Virginia is a complex system with multiple levels of publication requirements in place to ensure public transparency and participation. Virginia state agencies submit regulatory actions including promulgation, amendment, and repeal through a website operated by the Department of Planning and Budget for executive branch review and approval. Once adopted, regulations are submitted to the Virginia Office of the Registrar of Regulations in the legislative branch for official publication in the Virginia Register of Regulations and for incorporation of permanent regulations into the Virginia Administrative Code (VAC).

The integrated solution developed collaboratively between the two branches of government included a revamp of the Town Hall site and a completely new Regulation Information System. The business owners included the Office of the Registrar of Regulations (on behalf of the Virginia Code Commission) and the Division of Legislative Automated Systems from the legislative branch, and the Department of Planning and Budget and agencies of the Commonwealth from the executive branch. The combined application solved four common and significant business problems.

First, existing legacy systems had significant architectural differences, including databases (DB2 and MS SQL), entry points, user/agency requirements, legacy table/data structures, web server software (Blue Dragon and IIS), server side scripting tools (Cold Fusion vs. ASP.NET) and interface requirements.

Second, production of the Virginia Register of Regulations was predominantly a paper-based system of submission and preparation for publication using a central database that was unavailable to individual agencies.

Third, the VAC as published online was always several months out of date due to reliance on updates from the vendor which compiled final changes from regulations published in the Virginia Register of Regulations. Members of the public searching for current regulations faced a complicated process of determining the most current version of a regulation. Similarly, agencies did not have a current database to draw from while preparing amendments to regulations; many prepared and maintained separate databases for their own website users to provide current information to the public.

Finally, many images in the online VAC were unreadable by the general public due to restrictions in the update process. Because the VAC was updated in its entirety once a quarter through an outside source, the Office of the Registrar did not have the ability to improve tables and images for better public and agency access.

To create a fully integrated solution, policy personnel from both branches of government and agency users worked closely together to create business rules and requirements. Then, during a one-year application development period, web services personnel first provided an integrated proof of concept incorporating desired functionality. In-house technical teams then applied the business rules to create an entirely new system on the back end that eliminated data and system barriers while maintaining a high degree of security and version control. The new system also purposely avoided significant user change by adopting a single face agency entry approach using the familiar Town Hall interface as an option.

RIS allows state agency regulation writers (250+ users) to use RIS as a workspace for drafting new, amended, and repealed regulations. When an agency is ready to submit a regulation for executive review, RIS sends a snapshot of the proposed text of a regulation to the Town Hall for executive branch review. Once executive branch approval is given to the agency to proceed with publication in the Virginia Register, Town Hall sends the regulatory package to RIS electronically for official publication in the Virginia Register of Regulations. To ensure that the Town Hall information is accurate and reliable, RIS automatically updates Town Hall six days prior to the Virginia Register publication date to reflect any changes/corrections to regulation text, public comment deadlines, effective dates, and publication dates made by the Virginia Register staff.

Statement of Justification:

b) Project Scope -- What is the significance to the improvement of the operation of government?

Please use this area to complete the improvements of the operation of government.

What is the significance of the idea or program, its effectiveness and practical applicability? Does it demonstrate excellence and continued development to the improvement of the operation of government? Does it exemplify vision and creativity? Is the idea or concept an original idea? If not, the nominee must demonstrate how the improvement is unique. For example, is it new technology, new operating or new management practices?

RIS and its collaboration with Town Hall 2.0 is innovative in two main ways. First, the project conquered the technological hurdle of combining two completely different IT systems so users could initiate input from either system and the two systems could share and update information at important trigger points in the regulatory process. Legislative and executive branch systems had significant architectural differences, including databases (DB2 and MS SQL), entry points, user/agency requirements, legacy table/data structures, web server software (Blue Dragon and IIS), server side scripting tools (Cold Fusion vs. ASP.NET) and interface requirements.

Second, the Virginia Registrar's Office, in the legislative branch, and the Department of Budget and Planning (DPB), in the executive branch, created a significant positive business impact by standardizing and simplifying input from every state agency, enabling efficient communication between the staff in the Registrar's Office and agency regulatory staff, and streamlining service delivery to the public.

The project enabled close collaboration between two branches of government, the executive and legislative, to benefit users and citizens. While the Registrar's Office and DPB had a valuable working relationship in the past, the RIS and Town Hall 2.0 collaboration brought their cooperation to a completely new level. The two offices are continuing to meet and communicate regarding new and ongoing projects.

Performance metrics for success that have been met as identified in the initial "proof of concept" project management plan include:

- Elimination of redundant data entry labor and postal costs
- Improved workflow in production of bi-weekly Register of Regulations
- Daily, automated, accurate upload of regulatory section text based on effective date as published in the Virginia Register of Regulations
- Elimination of support of antiquated legacy systems
- Improved data formats
- Streamlined records management
- Improved customer service
- Successful implementation of project management best practices
- Increase in workforce productivity
- Development of a mobile workforce through secure, efficient, Internet-based technology

By integrating business functions, the regulatory process has been moved from paper-forms-based information flow, thus improving data accuracy and timeliness and increasing information availability and usability.

All functions in the RIS project can be accessed with minimal requirements – a computer with Word 2003, Windows Internet Explorer, and an internet connection. Two small changes are required to hardware: a change to one Control Panel setting and the downloading of a macro that installs a small RIS toolbar in the user's Word toolbar area. With these changes, a user logs onto the RIS system and has full functionality. RIS is thus "green," allowing users to telework with full access to the system, whether from home or a telework center or while traveling for business or pleasure.

Multiple cumbersome paper-based processes have been eliminated. Agency staff now work collaboratively through secure access using a login ID and password, providing significant time savings and improvements in accuracy.

Access to the always current VAC allows agencies to link to the official regulations on their websites rather than maintaining their own databases. Effective Town Hall integration eliminates double data entry. Through RIS, agencies now download current VAC sections from the VAC database for new regulatory actions, and create final regulatory actions from the proposed version published in the Virginia Register. A data integrity check feature is available for use by agencies and Virginia Register staff to flag discrepancies between the current VAC and the proposed amendments. A "highlight" feature highlights new language in yellow and stricken language in red for ease in locating changes. RIS users and staff may access current regulatory projects in RIS from multiple locations by multiple agency staff, and numerous new report options are available. Multiple users may access the same regulatory project at one time thanks to version tracking and control. This function also gives the Registrar's office the ability to immediately address any agency training issues so they are resolved before submission of official documents.

The collaborative applications streamline and integrate administrative functions with business applications, support multiple program areas, enable version tracking of activities and vastly improve customer service. A staff member in the Registrar's Office can view the work in process with an agency regulation writer in real time, thus giving immediate feedback to new users. The two can discuss actions while talking on the phone and the staff member can direct actions and see the results immediately by refreshing the screen to see what has been stored on the RIS server.

Efficient records management is achieved automatically. Comments and changes are saved with the project through its lifecycle. A permanent file is generated for each regulatory action, aiding the Registrar with her statutorily required duty of maintaining a central repository of currently effective regulations, and allowing the Registrar to produce needed documentation for archiving with the Library of Virginia.

Statement of Justification:

c) Project Benefits -- What are the benefits realized by citizens, the state, or others associated with the rulemaking

Please use this area to complete the improvements of the operation of government. Does it provide a useful service to state, regional or federal governmental operations? Does it provide a useful service to another jurisdiction, such as territories or protectorates? Does it provide a useful service to the citizens?

One of the most significant benefits of the RIS Project is the up-to-date, real-time regulations now available via the Internet, 24/7, to all users and citizens.

The VAC as published online was always several months out of date due to reliance on updates from the vendor that compiled final changes from regulations published in the Virginia Register of Regulations. Members of the public searching for current regulations faced a complicated process of determining the most current version of a regulation. Similarly, agencies did not have a current database to draw from while preparing amendments to regulations; many prepared and maintained separate databases for their own website users to provide current information to the public. With the Registrar's Office now maintaining the database, vast improvements have been made to the appearance of text, tables and images and an automated, accurate update of the database is performed daily at 2 a.m.

While much of the improvement for citizen interaction with the regulatory process is through the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall through its instant access to and participation in the regulatory process, the RIS project has enhanced the Town Hall public access by improving the accuracy of information found there. Prior to the implementation of RIS, regulatory information on Town Hall did not reflect changes made to regulatory proposals as published in the Register of Regulations, which is the official version. The interactive nature of the new RIS/Town Hall interface means editorial and other corrections made in the Registrar's Office prior to publication are now displayed to the public in a timely fashion.

Accuracy and version control have been guaranteed through the combined review and promulgation process enabled by the integrated systems. Taxpayers benefit from the improved efficiency and economy of the systems; multiple cumbersome paper-based processes have been eliminated.

The transformation in business process was achieved through close collaboration between state employees rather than outsourcing to a vendor; need for the previous vendor to provide updates for producing the online Virginia Administrative Code has been eliminated. The system was built to the exact business requirements of the Commonwealth, rather than modified to work within a commercial application.

Comprehensive and aggressive training combined with adoption of the Town Hall format already familiar to agency users allowed for quick adoption across multiple state entities. Over 250 state agency personnel have secure access to their regulatory action process through RIS. Several comments from agency personnel express the agency perspective on the changes:

- “At first, when I heard about the new system, I felt like my hair was on fire – now I’m on board and see this as a huge advantage for our agency.” – Doug Harris, Virginia Department of Health
- “The Department of Environmental Quality is staff to three environmental boards and between the four regulatory authorities has over 100 regulations. We have been using the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall and the RIS since they both went online. The Town Hall system has been up and running for several years now and primarily dealt with the regulation promulgation process and supporting documentation. The RIS system has taken it one step further by tackling the development of regulatory text.

“The Town Hall resulted in savings for the agency in both staff time and money, by making the executive review process and public notification process paperless. The RIS process has saved staff time as well. Many features of the RIS ensure regulation writers are working from the correct text and errors are discovered long before they become a problem. Doing things in a different way is always intimidating, but the developers made the transition as easy as possible by consulting with each other

and the users. Also, having to do things more than once is a waste of time. The developers of the two systems made a concerted effort to make sure agencies would not have to do that by making sure the two systems would talk to each other. The RIS and the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall have been significant improvements to the regulatory process in Virginia.” – Cindy M. Berndt, Director, Regulatory Affairs, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

- “Now we won’t have to wonder whose hard drive has the latest version of our amendments.” – Training session attendee

Governmental regulation can be a complex and confusing process, particularly for citizens. The Regulation Information System, in collaboration with the Town Hall, has streamlined and simplified this process for both government and citizens by standardizing and simplifying input from every state agency, enabling efficient communication between the staff in the Registrar's Office and agency regulatory staff, and streamlining service delivery to the public. Through an automatic updating process, RIS ensures that the Town Hall regulatory information is accurate and consistent with the regulatory information published in the official Virginia Register of Regulations. Improvements to regulatory text through use of tables and images rather than links to scanned documents has greatly improved readability and access for the public. Citizens can be assured that the online Virginia Administrative Code contains the current version of all state agency regulations through daily updating of the online Virginia Administrative Code on the date that a regulation becomes effective. Regulatory development and publication in Virginia have been transformed.